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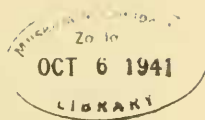
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A NEW SPECIES OF RATTLESNAKE
FROM VENEZUELA

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A long time will probably elapse before sufficient material is available from the vast range inhabited by *Crotalus durissus* and its close relatives to make a well co-ordinated study of the valid species and subspecies into which this group, and particularly *durissus* itself, should be divided. At present the following are usually recognized:

Crotalus durissus durissus Linné, 1758

Southern Mexico to Costa Rica

Crotalus durissus terrificus (Laurenti), 1768

South America

Crotalus unicolor van Lidth de Jeude, 1887

Aruba Island (and possibly Nicaragua)

Crotalus basiliscus (Cope), 1864

West coast of Mexico

Crotalus enyo (Cope), 1861

Central and southern Baja California, Mexico

Crotalus totonacus, Gloyd and Kauffeld, 1940

Panaco Island (and possibly Chiapas), Mexico

The members of this group are characterized by a number of morphological features in which they differ from other rattlesnakes, including a prominent vertebral ridge, enlarged scale bosses, a long tail, and peculiarities in head and fang shape, rattle-growth equation, and hemipenes.

Through the courtesy of Mr. M. Graham Netting of the Carnegie

Museum, Pittsburgh, I have lately had the privilege of examining two rattlesnakes from near Uracoa in the Maturin Savannah, Venezuela, which are so peculiar that, although clearly belonging to the *durissus* group, they should be recognized as a separate form. While it is entirely possible that this may ultimately prove to be a subspecies of *durissus*, intergrading through a stunted race that seems to be present on Mt. Roraima, there are no intergrades now available, so I follow a generally accepted practice and describe them as

***Crotalus vegrandis* sp. nov.**

URACOAN RATTLESNAKE

Type.—Carn. Mus. 17384, collected in the Maturin Savannah, near Uracoa, Sotillo District, State of Monagas, Venezuela, by Harry A. Beatty in 1939. There is one paratype, No. 17385 with the same collection data.

Diagnosis.—A species allied to *C. durissus* but differing therefrom, and from others in the same group, in being a dwarfed form with a peculiar pattern, in which the blotches are almost obliterated by the presence of many scattered white-tipped scales.

Description of the Type.—Adult male. Length over-all 636 mm.; length of tail 64 mm.; ratio of tail to total length 10.1 per cent. The head length is 26.3 mm. The vertebral process is sharply ridged.

The scale rows are 28-27-19. The dorsal scales are strongly keeled, especially anteriorly; the lowest lateral row is smooth. There are 11 rows at the center of the tail.

The head is oval, rather than triangular, with a blunt snout. The rostral is triangular, about as wide as high; it is bordered by six scales, a supralabial, a prenasal, and an internasal on each side. The scales on top of the head, anterior to the supraoculars, comprise a pair of triangular internasals, and a pair of larger prefrontals. The frontal area is occupied anteriorly by a pair of scales contacting medianly; posterior to these are 4 irregular scales, which in turn are bordered by a pair of diverging scales which are the remaining vestiges of parietals. Behind these the head is covered by small, fairly regular scales, which are conspicuously ridged and imbricate.

The nasals are divided; the anterior is the larger, the posterior contains the nostril. There are two loreals on either side; the upper is interposed between the upper preocular and the prefrontal. The supraoculars are of normal size and do not jut over the eyes. There are two preoculars (the upper larger), two suboculars, and three postoculars. There are three rows of scales between the supralabials and the orbit. The supralabials are 15-15, the first and fifth enlarged; the infralabials are 14-14, the first pair divided; the first four on either side contact the genials; the sixth on either side is the largest. The mental is triangular; there is one pair of enlarged genials contacting medianly.

There are 169 ventrals and 30 subcaudals. The anal is entire. The rattle string is complete and comprises ten segments. The first segments are distorted in shape so that the growth equation cannot be determined. The proximal rattle is 7.2 mm. wide.

Dorsally the ground color is light-olive, speckled with many white-tipped scales. While the forms of a few of the ancestral blotches are faintly in evidence, they and the paravertebral neck stripes are almost obliterated by the irregularity of the light scales. Laterally the light-tipped scales increase both in number and in the proportion of white. The ventral surface is mottled with olive and cream, growing darker posteriorly.

On the top and sides of the head the light-tipped scales are arranged in the form of irregular diverging rows. The lower labials are heavily mottled. The rostral is light edged. There is an irregular spot on each supraocular, defined by a light edge.

The tail is black, and there is a dark-brown area along the posterior vertebral ridge of the body equal to the length of the tail.

Paratype.—The paratype, Carn. Mus. 17385, is an adolescent female. It is similar in most important particulars to the type. The length over-all is 454 mm.; length of tail 32 mm.; ratio of tail to total length 7.1 per cent. The head length is 23.2 mm. The canthus is sharper angled than in the type.

The scale rows are 27-27-19. There are 11 rows at the center of the tail.

There are three loreals on the right and two on the left. The supralabials are 14-14. The infralabials number 15-16, the first being undivided.

There are 172 ventrals, and 22 subcaudals. The rattle string is complete, with six segments, measuring 3.1, 4.2, 5.4, 5.9, 6.3, and 6.0 mm. respectively.

The colors are the same as in the type except that the tail is dark brown rather than black. There are no marks on the supralabials. Blotches are somewhat more evident posteriorly in the paratype than in the type, and the ventrum is less mottled.

Remarks.—Among over 150 specimens of *Crotalus d. durissus* and *C. d. terrificus* I have seen no specimens like these two, either from Venezuela or any other parts of the range of the tropical rattlesnake.

Lately through the courtesy of Mr. Charles M. Bogert of the American Museum of Natural History, I have had a number of specimens from the vicinity of Mt. Roraima and elsewhere in British Guiana and Venezuela. None of these shows a trend in pattern toward the newly described species. While rattle measurements indicate that there may be a stunted race of *terrificus* in the vicinity of Mt. Roraima, this race is of normal *terrificus* pattern and coloration.

The rattle counts (fortunately both type and paratype have complete strings) indicate that the new species is much smaller than normal *terrificus*. The sixth or proximal ring on the paratype is only a little more than half the width of the *terrificus* normal, and ordinary specimens of *terrificus* with 10 and 6 rattles respectively would be much longer and several times bulkier than these two individuals.

